



## MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI

May 2, 2011

MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 80  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

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Everyone I have talked with -- from boat operators, to labors, scientist and engineers, and truck drivers have all said the same thing -- "I never thought I would see the day that the river would reach these levels".

We have exceeded the record stage already at Cairo. We are on a course to break records at many points as the crest moves through the system. Sometimes people celebrate with "records" -- but not this time. Making this decision is not easy or hard -- it's simply grave -- because the decision leads to loss of property and livelihood -- either in a floodway -- or in an area that was not designed to flood. The state of Missouri has done a superb job of helping people escape the ravages of water in the floodway. But other places -- not designed to flood have had no warning if their areas succumb to the pressures of this historic chocolate tide.

I spent last night on the river ... lashed to an anchor barge in the current near the top of the floodway. The rains continued to pound the deck of the Motor Vessel. The cold winds moved us around -- and the current and water levels kept increasing as the rain storms continue to grow over the Ar/Miss/Ohio/TN Watershed.

So, with the tool that has withstood many tests: the test of operation in 1937; decades of challenges that resulted in the 1986 Operation Plan; reviews and numerous unsuccessful court challenges -- I have to use this tool. I have to activate this floodway to help capture a significant percentage of the flow.

I don't have to like it but we must use everything we have in our possession, in the system to prevent a more catastrophic event. So, today, I give the order to operate the Floodway.

Since 1879, the seven-member Presidentially appointed Mississippi River Commission has developed and matured plans for the general improvement of the Mississippi River from the Head of Passes to the Headwaters. The Mississippi River Commission brings critical engineering representation to the drainage basin, which impacts 41% of the United States and includes 1.25 million square miles, over 250 tributaries, 31 states, and 2 Canadian provinces.

*Listening, Inspecting, Partnering and Engineering since 1879*